

Basis of Bodhicitta

The basis of Bodhicitta has two categories:

1. Physical basis
2. Mental basis

1. Physical basis

Tibetan: ལུས་རྟེན། - *Lue Den* (*Lue* = body, *Den* = basis, support, base, reliance)

Here the physical basis refers to the physical body someone should possess in order to be able to newly cultivate Bodhicitta. With respect to ordinary beings who abide in samsara it describes which of the six or three realms a person should belong to in order to be able to newly manifest Bodhicitta in his or her continuum.

Six realms / six types of being

Tibetan: འགྲོ་བ་ཅིགས་སྟུག་ - *Dro wa Rig Drug* (*Dro wa* = transmigrator/ being, *Rig* = kind/type,

Drug = six)

There are six realms of existence within samsara/cyclic existence:

1. Hell

Tibetan: རྟུལ་བ། - *Nyael wa* (*Nyael wa* = hell)

2. Preta / Hungry ghost

Tibetan: ཡི་དགས། - *Yi dag* (*Yi dag* = preta / hungry ghost)

3. Animal

Tibetan: དྲོ་བ་འགྲོ། - *Duen dro* (*Duen* = bowed, *dro* = go)

4. Human

Tibetan: མི། - *Mi* (*Mi* = human)

5. Semi celestial

Tibetan: ལྷ་མ་ཡིན། - *Lha Ma yin* (*Lha* = celestial, *Ma yin* = not)

6. Celestial

Tibetan: ལྷ། - *Lha* (*Lha* = celestial)

Three realms

Tibetan: ཁམས་གསུམ། - *Kham Sum* (*Kham* = realm, *Sum* = three)

Another way of categorizing the different realms in cyclic existence is to categorize them into the three realms:

1. Desire realm

Tibetan: འདྲོད་ཁམས། - *Doe Kham* (*Doe* = desire, *Kham* = realm)

2. Form realm

Tibetan: གནུགས་ཁམས། - *Zug Kham* (*Zug* = physical form, *Kham* = realm)

3. Formless realm

Tibetan: གནུགས་མེད་ཁམས། - *Zug Me Kham* (*Zug* = physical form, *Me* = free from/without,

Kham = realm)

The way the six and the three realms relate to each other is that the first five of the six realms (hell, preta, animal, human, and semi-celestial) belong to the desire realm. Regarding the celestial realm, there are celestial beings of the desire realms, celestial beings of the form realm and celestial beings of the formless realm.

The physical basis of Bodhicitta also has two subcategories

- a) The physical basis of aspirational Bodhicitta
- b) The physical basis of engaging Bodhicitta

a) The physical basis of aspirational Bodhicitta

Aspirational Bodhicitta can be newly cultivated in the continua of those who possess the physical body of any of the six realms. This is evidenced by several quotes from the sutras.

One sutra says:

*At that time eight thousand celestials and humans
Generated the mind of enlightenment.*

This sutra indicates that celestial and human beings are able to newly generate aspirational Bodhicitta.

The 'Questions of the Naga King, Sagara, Sutra' says:

Twenty-one thousand Nagas generated the unsurpassable mind of enlightenment.

and the 'Questions of the Naga King, Anavatapta, Sutra' says:

Seventy-two thousand Nagas generated the mind of unsurpassed, perfect, and full enlightenment.

Those two quotes establish that animals -- Nagas or serpents belong to the animal realm -- are able to newly generate aspirational Bodhicitta.

The 'Sutra of Repaying Kindness' says that our Teacher, Shakyamuni Buddha, in one of his previous lives as a hell-being newly generated Bodhicitta while pulling a chariot with great physical strength. This indicates that it is possible to generate Bodhicitta in the hell realm.

In dependence on those quotes one can infer that if it is possible to newly generate Bodhicitta in the hell and the animal realm, it should also be possible to newly generate it in the preta and the semi-celestial realm.

b) The physical basis of engaging Bodhicitta

The physical basis of engaging Bodhicitta is a celestial or human being's body. Therefore, in order to be able to generate engaging Bodhicitta and take the Bodhisattva vow practitioners must either be celestial or human. Further, of the three types of celestial beings they must either be celestial beings of the desire realm or celestial beings of the form realm. Celestial beings of the formless realm cannot newly take the Bodhisattva vow because in order to take the Bodhisattva vow one must be able to listen to the instructions of the spiritual teacher who confers the vows. However, celestial beings of the formless realm always abide in meditative absorption and do not possess any physical body so that they are unable to listen to those instructions.

According to Atisha's 'Lamp of the Path' in order for human beings to take the Bodhisattva vow they must first take the Pratimoksha / self-liberation vow.

Atisha's 'Lamp of the Path':

*Those who maintain any of the seven
Kinds of individual liberation vow,
Have the ideal [prerequisite] for
The Bodhisattva vow, not others.*

However, as only the human body can serve as the physical base of the Pratimoksha vow, celestial beings cannot take the Pratimoksha vow before they take the Bodhisattva vow.

2. Mental basis

Tibetan: སེམས་རྟེན། - *Sem Den* (*Sem* = mind, *Den* = basis, support, base, reliance)

According to the 'Jewel Lamp Sutra', the mental basis of both aspirational and engaging Bodhicitta is:

1. Having faith in the Buddha
2. Having compassion for sentient beings
3. Having perseverance

According to Maitreya's 'Ornament for the MahayanaSutras' the mental basis of aspirational and engaging Bodhicitta is faith.

Moreover, the mental basis of engaging Bodhicitta is aspirational Bodhicitta.

Benefits of Bodhicitta

Shantideva in his 'Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life' describes the following benefits of Bodhicitta:

1. Previously accumulated negative karma will get purified
2. One will take rebirth in the higher realms
3. One will be called 'Child of the Conquerors'
4. One will become worthy to become the object of worship of celestial beings
5. Eventually one will attain full enlightenment

Shantideva's 'Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life':

*The moment an Awakening Mind arises
In those fettered and weak in the jail of cyclic existence,
They will be named a 'Child of the Conquerors',
And will be revered by both human and celestial beings in the world.*

*It is like the supreme gold-making elixir,
For it transforms the unclean body we have taken
Into the priceless jewel of a Buddha-form.
Therefore firmly seize this Awakening Mind.*

Further, the following benefits are cited in Lama Tsongkhapa's *Lam Rim Chenmo* or 'Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment':

1. Bodhicitta is the only entryway to the Mahayana path
2. One will be called 'Child of the Conquerors'
3. One will outshine Hearers and Solitary Realizers from the point of view of lineage and disposition
4. One will become an excellent field of offering
5. One will easily accumulate great merit
6. Non-virtues and obstructions will be easily purified
7. One's temporary and ultimate purposes will be accomplished effortlessly
8. One will not be affected by harm or obstacles
9. One will quickly develop the stages and paths of insight
10. One will become a source of all well-being and happiness